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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 000856

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/16/2016
TAGS: PREL PINR PGOV ER SU
SUBJECT: EASTERN SUDAN PEACE AGREEMENT (ESPA) SIGNED

REF: A. ASMARA 829 B.ASMARA 802

Classified By: CDA K. Andrew Wroblewski, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: On October 14, 2006, the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA) was signed in Asmara, Eritrea. Senior level officials from the region attended the signing ceremony which was presided over by Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki, Sudanese President Omar Hassan Ahmed Al-Bashir and Sudanese First Vice President Salva Kiir. While the agreement has many shortcomings, the Eastern Front, Government of National Unity (GNU) and Eritrean mediator were all genuinely pleased with the outcome. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On October 14, the Eastern Front and GNU signed the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA) in Asmara, Eritrea. While Afwerki, Al-Bashir and Kiir presided over the signing, a number of other senior officials were also present namely the President of Djibouti, Ismail Omar Guelle; the Secretary General of the Arab League, Mr. Amr Mousa; Egyptian Foreign Minister, Mr. Ahmed Abulkheit; Yemeni Foreign Minister, Dr. Abubaker Al-Khurbi as well as the Kuwait Minister for Emirate Affairs, Sheik Nasser Asubah Al-Ahmed.

¶3. (C) The chairmen of each of the delegations, Mussa Mohammed Ahmed for the Eastern Front and Mustafa Osman Ismail for the GNU briefly addressed the audience. Each thanked the GSE for their role in bringing peace to Eastern Sudan and highlighted the benefit of not having the international community involved in the mediation. They further highlighted the need to now turn their attention to Darfur and seek a resolution of that crisis. President Al-Bashir also spoke, expressing his profound thanks to President Isaias and Eritrea for their constructive role in mediating the peace process in a timely way.

¶4. (C) After a break for Iftar and prayers, President Isaias addressed the audience (see septel for full text) stressing the importance of this agreement in the overall stability of Sudan. He claimed the agreement "constitutes one of the building blocks of comprehensive peace in the Sudan." While Isaias heaped much of the success of the ESPA process on the Eastern Front and GNU, particularly the leaders of the delegations and the GNU leadership, he could not let the opportunity slip to disparage the international community. First, he focused on the concept of "international community" claiming that the term "represents the interests of the only superpower and its ilk to the exclusion of all others." Then Isaias went on to highlight some "cardinal issues," namely cautioning regional partners about the "paramount importance of withstanding external interference, as well as countering overt and covert meddling." Much of President Isaias' speech was met with enthused outbursts from members of the National Congress Party (NCP) and other GNU delegates, however the Eastern Front remained very quiet throughout his speech.

¶5. (U) Following the speeches, Mussa Mohammed Ahmed and Mustafa Osman Ismail signed the agreement. The ESPA is composed of six parts: Political Issues; Economic, Social and Cultural Issues; Comprehensive Ceasefire and Security Arrangements; Consultative Conference on ESPA; Implementation Modalities and Timeline; and General Provisions. (Note: The Full text of the agreement has been sent via email to SPG and Khartoum. Many of the details are spelled out in ref A and B. End Note).

¶6. (U) The ESPA calls for the parties to hold a consultative conference within thirty days of signing the Agreement. Per ref B, the consultative conference is expected to be held in Tesseney, Eritrea in early November. The aim of the consultative conference will be publicizing and mobilizing support for the ESPA; building up momentum and providing a conducive atmosphere for the timely and effective implementation of the ESPA; and providing a forum for all stakeholders to present their observations and recommendations to the national and Eastern Sudan authorities. Similarly the ESPA calls for the creation of a Joint Implementation Committee (JIC) composed of representatives of the GNU and Eastern Front to monitor the implementation of the ESPA and to be set up within thirty days of the signing of the Agreement. Vice President Kiir will chair the JIC and the to-be-named Assistant to the President from Eastern Sudan will be the vice-chair.

¶7. (C) Comment: Post was not surprised by the anti-international community rhetoric throughout the ceremony. We believe that Isaias was using the opportunity to again show the Sudanese that he too can take a strong stance against the role of international community - specifically the U.S. - in the issues of Sudan and the Horn of Africa. Isaias' rhetoric appears to reinforce the GSE's determination to garner Sudanese and regional support for Eritrea to take the lead in finding a solution to Darfur. End Comment.

WROBLEWSKI